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WISCASSET

THE HOME OF
MY ANCESTORS

and

THE PLACE OF
MY BIRTH

By MAUD FULLER BRIGGS

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Church and Courthouse,
and a Portion of the
Commons, Wiscasset

Wiscasset

WISCASETT and my ancestors! Or my ancestors and Wiscasset! I seldom think of one without the other, they are so closely interwoven. To really make one's ancestors live in the present day it is first of all necessary, it seems to me, to have two things—background and atmosphere, the background consisting of the environment, and the atmosphere being in the spot where the men and women of long ago walked the country roads, went into the houses through the beautiful old doorways, looked at the grand old trees, beautiful river or hills, or both as the case may be—and you say to yourself, "Instead of being away off in the dim past my great-grandfather and grandmother, my people, my very own, stood right here, thought of all this that I see just as I do and thrilled to all the beauties of my native town."

It is the unwritten law of every Hindu that he shall revisit the place of his birth at least once in every twelve years. Was this law made for the benefit and refreshment of the soul? To me it seems that it undoubtedly was made just for that reason. I do not think that I am any exception to the general run of people who go back to the homes of their fathers when I say that all that is noblest and best in me comes to the fore with a great rush so that it hurts, the emotions are so deep, as I stand by the graves of my own in the quiet old grass-grown graveyards of Wiscasset—"Such wonderful people! Am I worthy to carry on the name they left to me—a name standing for Godly living and noble character?" (Moralizing comes very easy here.) You breathe a prayer that you may achieve high ideals in a world that sadly lacks them sometimes, especially at the present day.

My brother, coming on business to Boston a few years ago, decided without even letting me know he was in these parts, to make a pilgrimage to Wiscasset—a veritable Mecca to us all and a very sacred place especially to him, who never had been there.

Arriving late Saturday, on Sunday morning he walked up the road, past the house built by our Father and where I was born, and turned down the highway in the direction of Bath. Passing a comfortable looking house he noticed an aged lady in stiff black with a white cap, who beckoned to him imperiously. In one hand she had a staff, a cane; in the other a book. He wrote me that he went toward the gate and lifted his hat.

"You are a stranger here?" she asked.

"I was," he replied, "until yesterday; and now I feel I shall never cease regarding Wiscasset as my home, the home in which I want to die."

"I am glad that you feel that way," she rejoined, leaning on her cane. "Do you think it pretty?"

"I know it is beautiful, beautiful in a holy sense, for me, Madam. It is a place of memories."

"Young man, you have expressed it. It's that I feel too. There was no town of its size in all the world that had bigger men, men with brains. I always think of them as giants. There were giants in those days, as the story books say. I like to think of them that way—Giants—who did things—and all are gone. Faugh! The generation here now! They're as little as—well, as little as tin whistles alongside of the sirens of ocean steamers. They do not make big men nowadays. Why, Sir, if these United States had the men of Wiscasset of half a century and more ago, there would be no fear of Communism or Bolshevism, or any other anti-Americanism. But they're all gone!"

Someone in the house calling her she went inside. My brother often wondered who she was but he left town too soon to make inquiries.

It is seldom that one has his thoughts and feelings put into words so beautifully expressed that they might be a poem in blank verse, and the letter from my brother, which I shall read, is one of my most cherished possessions, so adequately does it express what for years I have felt about my birthplace. It was some few years ago that he wrote as follows: "I recollect the blue of the horizon lines, the grey-green of the river and bay, the white and warm pink of frame and brick structures, and the new-washed blue of the

sky above Wiscasset. No place, it seems to me, is more restful in its coloring, more soothing in its complacency of age. Does it affect you that way?

"I felt very young, very reverential, and I had the feeling that my hat should be off most of the time. The deep grass in the ancient graveyard in the town, the lichened tombstones, tottering or sunken above leveled spaces where is left no trace of mounds, all reminders of the quick procession of the years, of the lifetime that is but the passing of an infinitesimal throb in the pulsing of eternity, came to me as a challenge to be worthy of the heritage our name signified. What have we but that? By what other than a name are we remembered? Perhaps the Chinese are wiser than we in their worship of ancestors. The prayers that are offered to the dead in daily communion with the spirits should teach the great obligation of life: to worthily discharge the debt to the father and his father and his father's father, the debt that can only be repaid by so living that one honors by rectitude in all things the memory of the departed.

"The quiet villages of New England occupy a spiritual importance in our national life. We will have to grow older as a nation before we see this clearly and generally, but certainly they are the shrines of America. From them came the flaming courage that builded the republic, they sent forth the first culture, gave the new country its enduring literature. In statesmanship, in art, in political science and commerce they led to the grudging admiration of a critical Europe.

"I thought of these achievements as I sat by our Father's grave that last afternoon in August, in the plot that tells of the part the Smiths of Maine played so gloriously in the building of our country, by stalwart patriotism both in the halls of government and on the battlefield. I saw the graceful clippers go smoothly over the ways into the Sheepscot and I visioned the women and the youths and the old, old men who waved the farewell as, gleaming white canvas spread to the pine-scented breeze, the Wiscasset-built sailing ships of a hundred years ago started on the adventure trips to far-away ports, taking their share of

credit in the maritime triumph of the little new Republic! And I saw the shipyards crumbling in the decay of disuse; I saw our father pack up his law books and leave the silence of the deserted town to seek his future in the West; I saw a similar exodus all up and down the coast and thought—The builders of America were the sons of Maine and Massachusetts, Vermont and Connecticut. They left the birthplace to open up the wilderness to the West and they carried out the obligation that was their heritage from the fathers, who two centuries before had sailed from England to build a new land.

"No one can go back to the home of his father without sensing the holiness of family relationship, when, before him, unfolds the past, illustrated, brought back to consciousness by the physical signposts such as the old house, the library, the archives in the town hall, the old men and women who still remember. He gains a new start in what was done for HIM, and he is dead to honor, dead to the Creed of Life, if he does not recapitulate his own achievements or failures and ask himself the question—Am I keeping faith with my people; am I safeguarding the name they gave me? Am I worthy? What am I doing to make the name that meant so much here still respected and honored? Has my country called me, and have I responded? Am I worthily the custodian of the heritage of my fathers?"

Could anything be more beautifully expressed? The Smiths had always the gift of writing. Surely their mantle has descended on one of their descendants and he will achieve something fine one of these days.

From time to time I asked many of my friends there the meaning of the name Wiscasset, and no one seemed to know. Finally I borrowed an old history owned by a childhood friend of mine and looking through it I opened to the origin of the name, quite by chance. There is an old block-house, of which more later, situated on a small hill, and from this one has a clear view of three rivers with their tides, as just below the block-house these waters are somewhat salt. So Wiscasset means "three tides", according to the old history.

The House Where I Was
Born. Built by My Father
Joseph Emerson Smith

The quaint old seaport town on the Maine coast rose to fame in a dozen years, housed itself in mansions furnished with all the luxuries of the times, and laughed and danced away the brief period of its prosperity, and has retired for the past century "to a life of gentle penury." Once a Belle of Maine towns she now is quiet, dreaming of her past glories. And what caused her castles in the air to come tumbling down over her head? Nothing less than Napoleon, who, as one writer of those times has said, "hurled his stone into the European pond and the ripples reached even our shores." The embargoes, followed by the war of 1812-14 killed the commerce of Wiscasset. Here were built before this time vessels sailing to all ports of the world. After the troublous times were over some good fortune returned with privateering and later whaling and lumber industries, but the town never held its head as high again.

The early occupants built ships to sail down the safe channel of the Sheepscot River to the ocean, only fifteen miles away. The ocean being so near, of course, accounts for the salty taste of the waters of the three rivers: the Kennebec, Androscoggin, and Sheepscot. The Sheepscot at Wiscasset is nearly a mile wide and you may imagine that the Harbor is exceptional, never freezing and being deep enough to float the largest ships, so it is no wonder that in the early days it became a flourishing seaport.

One of the most famous of these early ships was the "Stirling", built on the river in 1805, commanded by a vigorous Scotch youngster, Capt. "Jock" Johnston. This ship was immensely profitable, but her fame today lies in the fact that before her mast a lad named Fenimore Cooper took his first lessons in seamanship.

In 1848 the 'Wiscasset", a whaler, brought back to America not only a very handsome profit for her owners, but little Andrew Carnegie, who, with his family, was emigrating from Scotland. Fifty years later a newspaper man sent to Mr. Carnegie a picture of the ship, which had come from Wiscasset, and received the following reply:

"Skibo Castle, Ardway, N. B.,
June 3, 1902.

"Mr. Carnegie thanks you sincerely for sending him a picture of the 'Wiscasset' which is no doubt the bark in which his parents sailed with himself and his brother in 1848.

"He remembers the Master, Capt. Long, and there was a sailor on board who was a great favorite, called Barrymore. Mr. Carnegie has often said if he could find him he would like to be of service.

"He became a little sailor and was sorry to leave the ship after seven weeks upon it."

The Wiscasset boom was at its height in 1801. The fortunes rolled up were amazing. The mansions with their wonderfully beautiful old doors were built along Water and High Streets, and the society was livelier and more colorful than that of most New England towns.

A certain Captain Binney from Massachusetts, who was in command of Fort Edgecomb on Davis Island across from the town, wrote in 1810:

"I believe Mrs. Binney has been to more tea parties since she has been here (Wiscasset) than for some years in Boston; for in that respect Wiscasset has the prevailing manner of fashion of Hingham—afternoon visits and tea parties are all the rage. And for dress, the ladies do everything this side of New York for 'tis from New York they get their fashions."

From 1810-1812 the town so dear to my heart was a very gay and extravagant place. Costly furniture was in the old mansions, some had erected veritable palaces, such was the wealth of the ship owners, and thereby entailed woe on their descendants. Large dinner parties, frequent balls, rides, water excursions were given, and the people were very showy in dress and in their entertainments and the shipholders talked large of the amazing amounts of money attained through trade in different ports. Ships were continually sailing to and fro with lucrative freights and no place was richer or gayer of its size in the whole United States.

This account of Wiscasset life of the period 1810-1812 is taken from the account of a young beau of the day, John H. Sheppard, a Harvard graduate, who started a law business there.

The higher the climb the harder the fall, and the contrast of those days and now is most startling. Today only a picturesque village drowsing on the hillside, some beautiful old houses, old as the wonderful elms that shade them, and the rotting timbers of many wharves, are left. The automobile whizzes through the town in a hurry to get to the old Block House and, as one woman expresses it "This seems the only thing in keeping with that meteoric past."

Do you wonder that my thoughts are filled with sadness when I return, thinking of the contrasts of those days and now. One of the houses, a veritable castle, is called Castle Tucker, and occupies one of the beautiful sites overlooking the harbor. Now it is a boarding house and has a public garage at the back.

All the other houses, so far as I know, are still intact, in different states of preservation, but in each case the old doorways are untouched. The only bright spot that I can see in the poverty of the place is this fact—that there has been no means to spend in changes, no homely modern houses have been wedged in here and there, a blot on the landscape as so many of them are, and one walks up and down the main street to the top of the hill without seeing any change on either side excepting that of age, surely a most unusual sight these days.

Let us enter for a moment, by one of these doorways, into one of the mansions. Naturally, though I have had the good fortune to be entertained in several of them, I choose the one I love the most, the home of my ancestors.

The doorway is the only one of its kind in the town, with its semi-circular porch. It was originally owned by Judge Lee and bought by my grandfather, Samuel E. Smith, and still lived in during the summer by some of his descendants. It is a square brick house, painted white, and a room on either side of the entrance hall. At the time my grandmother lived there the room had a quaintness all its own. Blanche Howard, a sister of my aunt by marriage, wrote "One Summer" while visiting her sister in the old house, and has described the living room, or parlor, as it was then called, in her book in these words: "It was furnished with that profound regard for angles which charac-

terizes the New England country house, adorned by the taste of fifty years ago. An uncompromising sofa loftily elevated its antique back, and contemplated with austere approval a line of rigidly upright chairs placed at exact distances upon the parallelograms of the carpet, and flanked by two triangular foot-stools. Everywhere was solidity, regularity, the quintessence of stiffness." She speaks of the deep window seats with their faded damask cushions, the coral branches on the whatnot, the grim mahogany skeleton that haunted a shadowy corner, queer paintings on the walls evidently of shepherdesses, with brick-red feverish cheeks and their beady eyes fixed upon her. In the book she calls this room "Mother Jackson's 'Best Parlor' ", where were arrayed her most venerated treasures, cherished objects handed down from past generations or gathered together through the long years of her monotonous life and always sacredly guarded from the approach of vulgar hands.

"The ornaments, if one may be permitted to use so frivolous a term in regard to the smaller relics, were taken up tenderly, lifted with care, when the momentous event of a yearly tea-party rendered sweeping and dusting imperative; the more massive treasures were moved but slightly, and by the priestess's own hands, and then pushed gently back upon the identical spots in the carpet where she herself had first placed them in admiring awe half a century before. Dear old lady, who closed her eyes peacefully and was gathered to her fathers, little dreaming that ere long the sacred precincts of her 'best room' would be invaded."

It is strange to me that the beauties of the room were not spoken of at all, only its dreariness. I remember so well the visit I made to Wiscasset, going from Portland just for the day with a dear elderly cousin of mine, and I had one thrill after another all of that never to be forgotten time. My cousin would meet people she knew along the main street, some of them very old people, bent with age, and one man, a friend of my father's, to whom I was introduced took my hand in his and kept saying, "Well! Well!

The "Governor Smith House," Wiscasset. Here Governor Samuel Emerson Smith Lived for Many Years

So this is Joe Smith's little girl, Well! Well!" until I felt the years drop away, and I never expect to feel so young again.

Finally we arrived at the old house and saw my aunt. Three things of beauty stand out clearly in my mind and the rest faded into the background. The portraits of my grandfather and grandmother, in the "best parlor", so wonderfully painted, and the old harp under my grandmother's portrait. So life-like was her picture that it seems as if she must step down from the old frame and touch the strings. I can remember as if it were yesterday how I registered a vow that some day I would have copies of those paintings for my own. But, alas, so far my vow has not come true.

Wiscasset has many things of interest beside its old houses. The classic courthouse of red brick, with green blinds and round-arched doorway has been described as "so dignified that the white colonial church next door seems almost frivolous by comparison."

Many men of note have here in this aristocratic old courthouse pleaded the cause of Justice, among them Judge Bailey, an intimate friend of Samuel Adams and John Quincy Adams, also Daniel Webster and Benjamin F. Butler. The vaults contain recorded deeds of great interest, among them the "Plymouth Grants" and Indian sales of tracts of land for a bushel of barley, skins of wine, or skins of animals. These old documents, curious in wording, are signed by famous chiefs whose names were often the terror of the countryside. One of the deeds, said to be the oldest recorded in the United States, bears the sign manual, a roughly drawn bow and arrow, of that same Samoset who greeted the Pilgrims on their landing at Plymouth. It is dated July 2d, 1625, and barters a kingdom for fifty beaver skins.

The "fire company" was founded in 1801. I read an account of this antique leather bucket brigade—"How comforting to the householders of those days", the account goes on to say, "to have the assurance that at the peal of the Paul Revere bell sounding the alarm of fire, a company of valiant neighbors would appear with leather buckets

and a real engine. Each member of the society was bound by the rules to keep in his hall two leather buckets, two bags, and a bed wrench, and was liable to a fine if the equipment was lacking or not in good condition." I have not as yet found out why there was need of a bed wrench. "The quarterly meetings of the society have always been social affairs, even so far back as when a bluff captain or major powdered his queue and squeezed himself into his blue coat with brass buttons in preparation for the fire company supper." The writer of this goes on to say that she understands that the water which was so much in demand at fires was not in such demand at the banquets! Today the old club is purely ornamental—a social organization—the insignia of which is a leather bucket rampant hung above an engine with the device of 1803, couchant. Far better the old bell to call the volunteers than the dreadful siren whistle which now blows, without stopping, for one half hour, as it did at midnight some summers ago when my son Edward and myself were asleep in the Wiscasset Inn. We dressed and went to the fire with the whistle still blowing, calling the men, who finally assembled in trousers and undershirts, the only thing distinguishing the Captain from the others being that he wore a white rubber coat. I think the whole main part of the town would have burned down if a man passing through about midnight had not seen the flames coming through a roof. He pulled in an alarm which started the dreadful whistle and the whole town going to the fire. The Captain was an expressman of the town and the company, as far as I could see, paid not the slightest attention to his orders. One line of hose, with tremendous force of water pouring out of it was carried up a ladder from the back of the shop, and another from the front, and you may imagine what it meant to be struck by the whole force of the water in the chest, or head, or anywhere, the men at the back hitting, of course, the men coming in from the front. It would have been one of the funniest things I ever saw if it had not been so tragic.

The proprietor of our hotel told me that he thought that his last moment had come as he received the force of the water from one hose full in the chest.

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After the danger to the town was over everyone was glad that the shop burned down, as it was a very dirty place and the fire caused by a "still". The owner had certainly the surprise of his life when he returned from a week-end visit somewhere and found no shop, no sleeping place, no "still", and no sympathy from anyone in the town.

I have always taken Wiscasset perhaps a little too seriously and I think this incident is the only exciting and funny one that ever happened to me during any of my visits there.

Formerly the only way to reach Edgecomb from Wiscasset was by being forded across the river. I have a picture of this old ford, just a sort of raft. For many years now there has been a long bridge across and it is one of the interesting sights of the town. Over it one goes to reach the Old Block House and the Marie Antoinette House, with so much interesting history and legend. It connected Edgecomb with an island, from which a second open bridge extended to the opposite village of Romney. In Wiscasset's golden days this bridge was a famous promenade and place of resort. There at sunset the people would gather, old and young, rich and poor—to walk, to talk, to see and be seen, to watch the long light sweep across the wide river and fade away behind the hills. There rose castles in the air without number—there hearts were broken, sweet and bitter words were said, and many sad farewells. It is a gloomy old bridge, crowded with phantoms. (From "One Summer")

Some time ago, before the bridge was rebuilt, the stage coach went through into the water. Fortunately the tide was low and so no one was much hurt.

I found among my Wiscasset clippings, treasured for many years, a poem by an uncle, Benjamin F. Smith, telling about the old ford and speaking also of the stage coach incident. It is too long to read but I will give a few verses:

"The Bridge—I mean the public way
That spans our fair as Naples Bay,
(As all admit who ever pass it)
From Davis Island to Wiscasset.
I knew the boat that early plied
From hither to the thither side;

The wheel-horse, never known to fail,
  (Was it, or not, old Silvertail?)
I well remember too, my joy
  When first I crossed that bridge, a boy
And Clark's distinction, dear, unbought,
  His sculpin was the first fish caught.
There deeply carved into the grain
  My rude initials still remain
And letters three are by their side.
  Poor Will! How sad the death he died . . . . .
But other thoughts, of other Rind,
  Old Bridge, are thronging in my mind—
The summer nights, the golden skies,
  The laughing lips and laughing eyes,
The youthful, careless, joyous throngs,
  The tales, the jests, the maidens' songs.
And whispered vows I may not tell,
  With—but I'm glad she married well.
Ah! Joys unsullied filled the soul
  Not Time, not Stimpson ask us toll.
Farewell, Old Bridge! Long may you stand
  A needed link twixt strand and strand," etc.

Let us pass over this bridge, now rebuilt and in fine condition, and turning to the right we come soon to the Old Block House. Literally thousands of tourists visit this old land mark every summer and it is kept in perfect repair. Back in the Indian times they (the Indians) had been a source of great trouble and loss to the shipbuilding, lumber and farming interests of the ancient Dominion of Maine. When it was thought that they were about to take the war path, owing to mysterious signals being seen along the river at night, then the distant farmers sent their families to the Block House on Davis Island, or to neighbors near the old Block House. This was within a few hundred feet of the river, which protected it on three sides. There was no landing at the point, the rocks rising precipitously for fifty to sixty feet.

In a book sent to me by an old cousin who spent her summers in Wiscasset I found an interesting account of the old Block House. I had laid the book away so many years ago that I had nearly forgotten that I ever owned it. When finally found it proved a veritable treasure chest as to tales of the Indian times and also told all about the plot to have

Marie Antoinette brought to Wiscasset, or rather Edgecomb, across the old bridge and there housed in the house known all these years as the Marie Antoinette House.

To go back to the old fort, the old book told how the Block House was safeguarded by the eddies south of the island which made navigation perilous for anyone attempting to stem the swift and treacherous tides which raced through the narrows, thus proving still further to my mind that the name of Wiscasset, meaning "three tides" was really correct. The Block House was built of logs and massive timbers. It was two stories with a cupola, which was used for observations. A part of the upper room had been partitioned off to accommodate some homing pigeons. These remarkable birds were not always kept at the fort but in times of danger were shipped to points in the surrounding country where they could be released with messages warning the occupants of the Block House that Indians were approaching. Imagine pigeons so trained that they would fly to military posts on the coast and along the banks of the Kennebec and Penobscot, being left at the fort by soldiers passing through Wiscasset so that by this means the soldiers and settlers could communicate with each other with safety and great rapidity.

The upper walls of the Block House jutted out beyond the walls of the lower story by some three feet, and there were trap doors that could be opened so as to shoot down upon the Indians attempting to pile fagots against the walls.

The one door is described as a massive buttress of oak beams, with iron hinges of extraordinary size. Huge staples driven deep into the solid walls held in place the cross beams, or bars, which fastened the door.

For their own convenience and safety the settlers had made a landing place at the foot of the cliff by cutting a cave in the solid rock and cleverly concealing it with bushes. From this cave an underground passage led to the cellar of the Block House. For this passage, and only a short distance from the water, an iron door set fast in the solid rock, barred the progress of any chance intruder. The landing and the secret passage were for use in case of

emergency only. On the land side of the Block House the trees and underbrush had been cleared away for some distance and so no shelter could be found by an enemy except in the few patches of grass here and there.

Inside the fort was a well which promised a never failing supply of fresh water.

The houses outside the towns of Maine in these days were built of logs covered with bark or thatch. Beneath some of these cabins were excavations for cellars which were unwalled. The floor of the cabin was of pine logs hewed level on the upper side. A trap door in the center of the floor served for escape from the Indians when the Redmen were on the war path, and also as a means for reaching the larder, which was usually in the cellar. In case the roof was not flat and if the angle at which the logs were set allowed space enough, the garret furnished a sleeping room, and was also a storage place for odds and ends. Very few cabins had chimneys. A fireplace would be built in one corner and the smoke had to find its way out through a large hole in the roof.

Leaving the old Block House, along the road some distance is the house known as the Marie Antoinette House. This is at Edgecomb, Maine, and though not part of Wiscasset is so closely connected in its history with my native town that a sketch of one is not complete without some mention of the other.

Letters and manuscripts were found in an old trunk in the garret of the Captain Cloud Homestead at Wiscasset which threw light on what until then had been regarded as simply a legend. The discovery of the old papers told about the plot planning the escape from Paris of the French Queen who was to be brought to Wiscasset in the Captain's vessel and concealed in the old house in Edgecomb. Her own furniture from the palace and the Little Trianon made the spacious rooms as homelike as new and humble surroundings would permit. Here peace and quiet awaited the unhappy French queen. I can't begin to take the time to tell of all the intricacies of the Royalist plot of 1793. Suffice it to say that a small band of Royalists determined upon the rescue of the Royal family. Attempted escape

The Old Block House,
Wiscasset's Fort a
Hundred and More
Years Ago

by land had failed, so their thoughts naturally turned to America for an asylum. The King was executed in 1793 so now their efforts could only be directed to rescuing the Queen and the Dauphin. Tallyrand was the prime mover in arranging all the details. The American schooner, "The Sally", with Captain Cloud of Wiscasset commanding, only waited the arrival of the Queen and the Dauphin to set sail and had the belongings of the unhappy family, taken from the Tuileries, safely on board. A fatal decision was made which frustrated all the hopes of a rescue. Marie Antoinette was not told of the safety of the Dauphin, partly as it was next to impossible to communicate with her in her prison and partly because DeChaumont desired to keep the knowledge as a glad surprise to the prostrated Queen, believing it would give new life to her broken heart and reconcile her to the voyage from home and country to the New America. A box of flowers with a note concealed among the stems was considered the safest way to notify the queen of the plot for her escape. (How futile this would have been now with our up-to-date methods).

A cry "Make way for the prisoner" was to be the signal for certain friends to rush into the cell occupied by Marie Antoinette and aid her flight while others intercepted, and, if necessary, overpowered the gendarmes.

A carriage in waiting, at a convenient point, was to convey her by circuitous roads from Paris to Honfleur, or as near the mouth of the Seine as seemed safe, and there she was to be taken aboard a swift sailing vessel. "The Sally" of Wiscasset was to lay off and on in the English Channel and the transfer of the Queen to the American vessel was to be made just outside the Capes.

The whole scheme fell through owing to the refusal of Marie Antoinette to leave the prison, saying: "I am no longer Queen. I say to you, one and all, I prefer death by the guillotine, as my poor husband died, to life with the knowledge that my children have been robbed of their future."

Some time ago I found this poem in the Transcript:

SUBJUNCTIVE

Suppose Marie Antoinette had come to Wiscasset,
Escaped from Paris, escaped from violence, escaped from fear,
Would she have lived soberly and quietly,
Talking to the women in the square white houses here?

Where they saw gray water, she would have seen steel flashing,
Where they saw autumn leaves, blood she would have seen.
The shivering white birches would have seemed like frightened ladies,
Where the Wiscasset eyes found only moving green.

And when she saw the women go out into the barnyards
Then she would have felt her tired heart fail
Remembering the Trianon and a dress of flowered satin
And herself going milking with a silver milking pail.

So "The Sally" sailed without the French Queen and when the vessel reached Wiscasset, though the tales of the cargo were vague and mysterious, gossip had enlarged upon a few plain facts until the townspeople were wild with curiosity and crowded the wharf to such an extent that the work of unloading was greatly impeded. When the furniture that was so beloved by Marie Antoinette, and the beautiful tapestries, especially those in worsted which the former Queen had worked with her own hands, were taken from the schooner's hold, the crowd wept, each article bringing to mind the sufferings of the Queen and her horrible fate.

The furniture and household articles were taken over to Squam Island, now Westport, where stood the house which friends had selected as the refuge of Marie Antoinette in the event of her successful escape. It was large, hospitable, and built in colonial style. Its spacious rooms, filled with the rich mementoes of the doomed sovereign, were for many years a great attraction for visitors to the quiet New England village.

In 1835 the house was purchased by Capt. Gardiner Gore and moved across the Sheepscot River in scows to its present site in Edgecomb. In the course of time the rich tapestries and the antique furniture became scattered. One of the descendants of Captain Cloud secured several mementoes, among them being a sideboard, which was preserved

as an heirloom through several generations. Two very beautiful Sevres vases are now the property of the Metropolitan Museum of New York City. A clock was sold by a dealer in the town of Wiscasset to a Boston dealer and in taking it apart the purchaser discovered a plate with a French inscription which stated that the timepiece had been presented by the maker to the Queen Marie Antoinette on the birth of the Dauphin.

Into my beloved town, so full of beauty and historical interest, came, about 1789, my paternal ancestor, Manasseh Smith, son of Abijah and Lydia Rogers Smith of Leominster. He was born in Leominster, Massachusetts, in 1749, moved to Hollis, New Hampshire, in 1788 and afterwards to Wiscasset, where he died in 1823. When deciding on the ancestor whose Revolutionary War record would admit me to the sacred fold of the D. A. R., it was most natural that I should choose one whose life, or much of it, had been a part of Wiscasset. He was graduated with high honors at Harvard College with the class of 1773 and after studying law commenced its practice as a profession in Leominster, Massachusetts, where he was Clerk of Court. Some time after this he met and fell in love with Hannah Emerson of Hollis, New Hampshire.

I have no authority for the following story, in any books that I have read, excepting that of being handed down by an aunt who lived many years in Wiscasset. She said that when great-grandfather was a "gay young blade of a lawyer" in Boston he wished to marry Hannah and, as was the custom in those days, he went to her father for his consent to prosecute his suit. Mr. Emerson told the young suitor that he was too worldly; besides, the law was not for "Godly men" but for tricksters, and the honest man had no use for the law, since he feared nothing. Being very much in love Manasseh obtained Hannah's promise to wait for him, locked up his law books and went to the Harvard Divinity School, taking Orders in the Episcopal Church shortly before the outbreak of the War of the Revolution. Going through the War with the rank of Captain he rendered splendid service.

When he was mustered out he again went to Mr. Emerson and asked for the hand of his daughter. There was no objection this time and she became shortly thereafter his wife. It was not long afterwards that the Reverend Manasseh Smith resigned from the ministry and returned to the law.

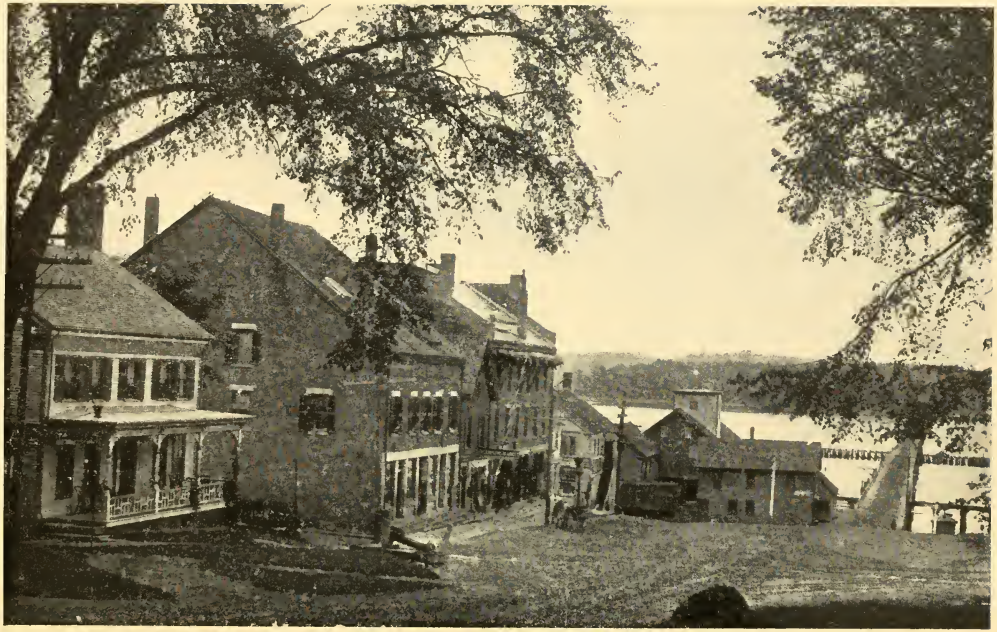
I have been able to find very little about my great-grandmother, Hannah Emerson. On her tombstone in the old graveyard of Wiscasset she is spoken of as: "A pious parent of eight filial children, lived an exemplar of beneficence and charity, and died in the Christian hope of a happy immortality." I have been told that my great-grandmother was the great aunt of Ralph Waldo Emerson but have not as yet looked it up to my own satisfaction. My Emerson family and the poet's, trace back to Thomas Emerson, who arrived in Massachusetts about 1635. He barely escaped with his life when the village was destroyed by Indians. Joseph Emerson, minister of Malden, was the grandfather of my great-grandmother. He was known as "the greatest student in the country" according to the records I have, Joseph's son William had a son William and on October 25, 1796, he married Ruth Haskins of Boston. Their son was Ralph Waldo Emerson. So I am living in hopes of its being correct.

Manasseh and his wife lived in a brick house, painted white, on the main street in Wiscasset and never moved from there, as far as I know. I have found very meager accounts of the first Manasseh in books but my father wrote of him once as follows:

"At this time (July, 1791) Mr. Smith was, I should judge, about fifty-five years of age. His figure was not tall; but there was a soldierly bearing about his movements, which his experience in the army chiefly explained, and a gavity of manner amounting almost to sternness, which was to be attributed to his strict, almost puritanical ideas of the obligations and duties of every day life, resting upon him in common with his fellows.

"His creed, as I have often heard him say, consisted in this: first, Godliness, or purity of mind and heart; second, cleanliness, or purity of person, which with him in-

Main Street, Wiscasset.
Looking Toward
Sheepscot River



volved the development of his physical powers, the keeping of the harp in tune; third, manliness, or purity of character, in which he comprehended all those active virtues, the exercise of which, while bringing happiness to others, secures contentment of mind, and, as a consequence, health of body to him who exercises them. 'The noblest mind the best contentment has' was a moving motto with him; and he used to say: 'Had Spencer written nothing else he were worthy of immortality.' His father, Abijah Smith, was not wealthy but by prudence and economy he had accumulated enough to be independent, and to enable him to give his son a college education.

"During the time that he was minister over a little parish in Hollis, New Hampshire, he acquired such a reputation for eloquence, piety, and strict devotion to duty, that he became one of the celebrated divines of his age, and certain articles published by him in 'The Boston Gazette' relating to the situation of the Colonies, and foreshadowing the important events which were so shortly to happen, so attracted the attention of Dr. Franklin that a correspondence sprang up between them which continued at intervals till the death of the philosopher in 1790. Though these two men had never met, their letters breathed the warmest friendship and when Franklin died Grandfather Smith mourned for him as for an elder brother."

I have often wondered what caused my great-grandfather to come to Wiscasset from Hollis and suppose this account, still quoting my father's account of him, answers my question. He goes on to say that "At the breaking out of the War in 1775 Wiscasset had already acquired some degree of importance by the extent of its commerce, and its situation and natural advantages were such that when peace was declared in 1783 it was thought it would speedily become a place of considerable magnitude. Some relatives settled in the town and from them he undoubtedly heard of the growing importance of the place and sometime afterwards it became his home."

In 1794 he went into partnership with Silas Lee and devoted himself to office business with intelligence and great success. He was an intimate friend and classmate

of Daniel Webster. Great-grandfather is not supposed to have had any library except the Statutes of the State and Blackstone. Law books were rare and expensive in his day and it was not until some years after the Revolution that any law books excepting a few of forms were published in this country.

He wrote, or had a hand, that it was almost impossible to read. It is said that Judge Paine, trying to read a special plea of his, was brought to a stand and scolded him heartily. Smith said that he had been a minister, in the habit of writing fast, which led him to be careless.

He had a large family and all of his sons were educated at Harvard, becoming successful and honorable practitioners. (From account of Manasseh Smith in library of State House in Augusta, Maine.)

The Sunday of those days, at least in the household of my ancestor, began, I am told, Saturday night and ended when the sun set on Sunday, and I can well imagine from what I have heard just how solemn and dreary the intervening hours were. Manasseh Smith took his religion most seriously. I have been told by a friend of my father that he had a body servant named Thomas who served him so faithfully that he was buried in the family lot in the old burying ground. I tried to find his stone when last there but without success.

My great-grandfather, according to my father's account, was very fond of his garden in the rear of the brick house, the only brick house in the town at this time, and was accustomed to pass all of his day time that he could steal from his business in what was ever the favorite employment of his life—the cultivation of vegetables, plants, and flowers. He loved to see things grow, and though his garden-spot was hardly a third of an acre in extent it somehow or other was made to produce earlier vegetables, and in greater abundance, than any garden of twice its size in the town. Through the day the sun seemed to be always shining on it except when the soil would be getting a little too dry, and then a shower would come which, just when it was wanted, would give to that third of an acre all the water it needed, though its nearest neighbors were thirsting for

a drink. When asked to explain these freaks of nature his reply would be: "Put more salt in your asparagus bed: salt draws the moisture, you know." But he always smiled as he said it, for he had no asparagus bed in his own garden, and his neighbors knew it.

Of my great-grandfather's children, eight in all, four sons and four daughters, I have only time to mention the seventh child—my grandfather, Samuel Emerson Smith. He was born March 12, 1788 and married Louisa Sophia Fuller of Augusta, Maine. He filled many positions and was Governor of Maine for three years, 1831-1833. The removal of the seat of government from Portland, Maine, to Augusta, Maine, was during his administration. When in Wiscasset they lived in the Governor Smith house, as it is called. He had five sons, my father being the second. He was born 19 March, 1835, and died in Chicago in June, 1881. My uncle, Edwin Manasseh, the fourth son, married and lived in Warren, Maine. When the Civil War broke out he raised a company at Wiscasset in April, 1861, of which he was commissioned Captain. This was Company G, 4th Maine Reg., which he commanded at the Battle of Bull Run. For his meritorious conduct he was commissioned a Major of the 4th Maine Reg., was soon afterwards placed on General Berry's staff, and acted in that capacity at the battles of Williamsburg and Fair Oaks, was distinguished for his valor and fell in May, 1862, at the latter battle, in the van, gallantly leading the 5th Michigan Reg. I am very proud of him, as well I may be. I have his prayer book, used and written in on the fly leaves with pencil shortly before he was killed. He was homesick and blue and thinking of his wife. Did he have a presentiment that he would never return from the Battle of Fair Oaks on the morrow?

In the old cemetery, known as the lower cemetery, are two graves with stones side by side—Manasseh Smith and his wife, Hannah Emerson. They are so unusual, these old stones, that there was an account of them in the Boston Transcript some years ago. Great-grandfather's stone has the Latin inscription: "Oriturus Oceidit" (He sinks, destined to rise.) Below is carved a full-faced Sun, and then "In memory of," etc.

Grandmother's stone has the Latin inscription: "Solen aspectal et segnitur" meaning—she looks at and follows the sun. Carved below is a half moon.

Here we will leave them, on the slope going down to the River which they loved; upright, God-fearing people of a wonderful town, having in our thoughts the verse:

"Life is real and Life is earnest
And the grave is not its goal.
Dust thou art, to dust returneth
Was not spoken of the soul."

And so may we, and our children, and our children's children so live, with the example of our ancestors before us always, that when we too are gathered to our fathers, our descendants may rise up and call us blessed.

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